

Remarks in FAVOR of HB 5534

ACT AN CONCERNING THE PRACTICE OF NATUROPATHY

Testimony of James Sensenig, ND

Connecticut General Assembly, Public Health Committee

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee,

I urge you to support House Bill 5534 in order to authorize prescriptive authority for Naturopathic Physicians.

I'd like to present just two points for your consideration.

First, while Naturopathic Physicians rely heavily on non-prescription medicines and supplements for therapeutic purposes, there are times when a patient requires a prescription medication. Presently this requires sending a patient to another physician where he or she incurs another visit simply to access a medication. This adds unnecessary cost to both the patient and his or her insurance carrier, and may delay treatment.

Second, the licensing law for naturopathic medicine in Connecticut has not kept pace with regulatory environment. When the statute was passed in 1923, there were no federal agencies, such as the FDA, classifying and restricting access to drugs; nor were there any medical societies setting standards of care. Thus many substances which have been part of naturopathic practice for nearly a century are now available only by prescription. Thus the scope of practice in Connecticut has been artificially narrowed over the years through regulatory action. This has limited the naturopathic armamentarium beyond that intended by the legislature.

Among those states that have licensed naturopathic physicians for most of the Twentieth Century, only Connecticut has not kept pace with the changes in the practice of naturopathic medicine.

That naturopathic physicians are qualified to prescribe medication within the scope of their training and education and do so safely is a settled fact. Unlike 1923, naturopathic medical schools are now accredited by an agency of the US Department of Education and regulated by the several states' agencies in the respective states.

Obviously, each of you as a member of the Public Health Committee is aware of the concept that the legitimate exercise of the police powers of the state in regulating any activity is the protection of the public health and welfare. The incredible safety record of naturopathic medicine easily justifies the requested changes to the current law.

Thank you for your time and effort.

A short summary of my background to describe my standing to comment on HB 5534 follows: I was licensed to practice naturopathy in Connecticut in 1980, and have been in the New Haven and Hamden area for 32 years. I am also licensed in Arizona, Oregon, and Washington (all of which have a full scope of practice including prescriptive authority). I am the former Dean of both the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, Oregon and the College of Naturopathic Medicine at the University of Bridgeport (UBCNM). I was the founding President of the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians and the Chairman of its Government Affairs Committee for a decade. Currently, in addition to my practice in Hamden, I am a visiting professor at UBCNM.